

Remarks

Claims 1-17 were pending in the application and were rejected. By this paper, claims 1, 2, 8, 12 and 13 have been amended, and reconsideration of the claims is respectfully requested. Furthermore, claims 11 and 16 have been canceled, and new claims 18-25 have been added.

In addition, the Summary Of The Invention section and Abstract have been amended to be consistent with claim 1 as amended.

Rejection Under 37 C.F.R. § 102

Claims 1-3, 6-9, 11, 12 and 14-17 were rejected under § 102(b) as being anticipated by International Publication No. WO 00/06426 (WO '426). By this paper, independent claims 1, 8 and 12 have been amended as discussed below in detail. Furthermore, dependent claims 2 and 13 have also been amended as shown in the preceding pages.

Claim 1 as amended recites:

an air bag module including an inflatable air bag;
a trim cover that covers at least a portion of the air bag module, the trim cover having a deployment seam for allowing the air bag to deploy through the trim cover; and
an air bag deployment member for guiding deployment of the air bag, the deployment member having first and second sections, the first section being connected to the trim cover and extending toward a first side of the air bag module, the second section being connected to the first section at a location proximate the trim cover and extending toward a second side of the air bag module, wherein the second section of the deployment member is not connected directly to the trim cover and the deployment member is connected to the trim cover on only one side of the deployment seam.

This combination of features is not disclosed in WO '426. For example, rather than showing a deployment member having a second section that is not connected directly to

a trim cover, as required by claim 1, WO '426 shows both portions 50a and 50b of module container 50 sewn to seat-back front cover element 25a and side cover element 25b by means of sewing thread 41. (See WO '426, p. 10, l. 24 thru p. 11, l. 2, and Figure 1.) Thus, claim 1 and the associated dependent claims are believed to be allowable.

Claim 8 as amended recites:

a frame;
an air bag module supported by the frame, the air bag module including an inflatable air bag, and an inflator for inflating the air bag;
a trim cover that covers at least a portion of the air bag module, the trim cover having a deployment seam for allowing the air bag to deploy through the trim cover; and
an air bag deployment band for guiding deployment of the air bag, the deployment band substantially circumscribing the air bag module, the deployment band further having first and second ends, the first end being connected to the trim cover on one side of the deployment seam, and the second end being connected to a portion of the deployment band proximate the first end, wherein the second end of the deployment band is not connected directly to the trim cover and the deployment band is connected to the trim cover on only one side of the deployment seam, and wherein the deployment band is configured to allow the second end to separate from the portion of the deployment band proximate the first end upon inflation of the air bag, to thereby allow the air bag to deploy through the deployment seam.

This combination of features is also not disclosed in WO '426. For example, rather than disclosing a deployment band having a second end that is not connected directly to a trim cover, as required by claim 8, WO '426 shows both portions 50a and 50b of module container 50 sewn to seat-back front cover element 25a and side cover element 25b by means of sewing thread 41. (See WO '426, p. 10, l. 24 thru p. 11, l. 2, and Figure 1.) Thus, claim 8 and the associated dependent claims are believed to be allowable.

Claim 12 as amended recites:

an air bag module including an inflatable air bag;

a trim cover covering at least a portion of the air bag module; and

an air bag deployment device for guiding deployment of the air bag, the deployment device having first and second sections, the first section being connected to the trim cover and extending toward a first side of the air bag module, the second section being connected to the first section at a location proximate the trim cover and extending toward a second side of the air bag module, wherein the second section is not connected directly to the trim cover, and wherein the deployment device is configured to allow the second section to disconnect from the first section upon inflation of the air bag.

Again, WO '426 does not disclose this combination of features. For example, rather than disclosing a deployment device having a second section that is not connected directly to a trim cover, as required by claim 12, WO '426 shows both portions 50a and 50b of module container 50 sewn to seat-back front cover element 25a and side cover element 25b by means of sewing thread 41. (See WO '426, p. 10, l. 24 thru p. 11, l. 2, and Figure 1.) Thus, claim 12 and the associated dependent claims are believed to be allowable.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 4 and 10 were rejected under § 103(a) as being unpatentable over WO '426 in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,206,410 to Brown (the '410 patent); claim 5 was rejected under § 103(a) as being unpatentable over WO '426 in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,967,546 to Homier et al. (the '546 patent); and claim 13 was rejected under § 103(a) as being unpatentable over WO '426 in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,045,151 to Wu (the '151 patent). Because claims 4, 5, 10 and 13 depend from independent claims that are believed to be allowable as discussed above, claims 4, 5, 10 and 13 are also believed to be allowable.

New Claims

New claims 18-25 have been added for consideration by the Examiner. Because claims 18-25 each depend from one of independent claims 1, 8 and 12, claims 18-25 are each believed to be patentable for at least the reasons discussed above regarding the associated independent claim.

Conclusion

Applicants have made a genuine effort to respond to each of the Examiner's objections and rejections in advancing the prosecution of this case. Applicants believe that all formal and substantive requirements for patentability have been met and that this case is in condition for allowance, which action is respectfully requested. If any additional issues need to be resolved, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at his earliest convenience.

Respectfully submitted,
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